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ABSTRACT

This document contains chapter 6 (5 articles) of a collection of 35 articles primarily from American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD) publications on the most important legal and ethical topics about which all school counselors need to be informed. "Ethics Comes of Age: Introduction to the Special Issue" (Jeffrey A. Kottler) offers 13 reasons why professionals who engage in group counseling must be aware of special problems. "Ethical Considerations in Using Group Techniques" (Gerald Corey, Marianne Schneider Corey, Patrick Callanan, and J. Michael Russell) provides a comprehensive overview of issues group counselor face, with a specific focus on implementing group techniques. "So You Think It Is A Secret" (Kathleen L. Davis and Naomi M. Meara) discusses the problem of keeping group counseling sessions confidential and offers practical guidelines for fostering confidentiality within a group. "Ethical Issues and Group Work With Children" (Cynthia K. Terres and Marva J. Larrabee) offer recommendations regarding group counseling programs within schools. "Unethical Behaviors We All Do and Pretend We Do Not" (Jeffrey A. Kottler) calls upon counselors to be more honest with themselves regarding what they say and do in groups.
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5

ETHICAL ISSUES IN GROUP WORK

Group counseling presents ethical issues not found in individual interventions with clients. The advantages of a comprehensive group counseling program are numerous; however, school counselors who direct such programs of services need to be familiar with potential ethical problems. Kottler (1982) offers 13 reasons why professionals who engage in group counseling must be aware of special problems.

Corey, Corey, Callanan, and Russell (1982) provide a comprehensive overview of the many issues group counselors face, with a specific focus on implementing group techniques.

Davis and Meara (1982) discuss the special problem of keeping group counseling sessions confidential and offer practical guidelines for fostering confidentiality within a group.

Although group counseling in general presents special problems, providing group counseling for children introduces issues not found when working with adults. Although the *ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (1984) does not directly address group counseling, some specific guidelines are found in the *AACD Ethical Standards* (1988). The *ASGW Ethical Guidelines for Group Work* (1980) provides additional direction upon which Terres and Larabee (1985) base their recommendations regarding group counseling programs within schools.

Kottler (1982) calls upon counselors to be more honest with themselves regarding what they say and do in groups. He maintains that counselors often distort information they convey to group counseling clients.

Ethics Comes of Age: Introduction to the Special Issue

Jeffrey A. Kottler

Ethics is a timely topic, one that everyone would say merits more attention, whether they believe it or not. It has been only in the past decade that ethics has received so much press, perhaps because it has traditionally been considered a boring, esoteric, and largely irrelevant branch of philosophy for modern day practitioners. But then came Watergate, and the public got a crash course in the abuses of leader power. Suspicions worsened still when Charlie Manson and Jim Jones got into the act, proving with casual arrogance how group leaders can effectively use dimensions of trust, cohesion, peer pressure, and reinforcement to induce murder or suicide. The Moonies, Scientologists, and EST-ettes then entered the scene, further demonstrating both the attraction and dangers of group-oriented therapeutic movements. Whether we like it or not, the time has come to close our ranks, to demonstrate our professional character, our responsibility, our integrity. And from such concerns, ethics has finally come into prominence, spawning greater leader effectiveness, our own ethical guidelines, and yes, a special issue of our journal devoted to this timely topic. This special issue treats the subject of ethics from a group practitioner's viewpoint, emphasizing practical implications, controversial issues, and above all, stimulating discussion.

Ethics is a subject of particular importance to group leaders because of the special problems our work presents. These unique issues that are an implicit part of our practice make us more vulnerable to error:

1. Verbal abuse and subsequent casualties are more likely to occur in groups than in individual treatment because of specialized group techniques. (See article by Corey, Corey, Callanan & Russell in this chapter.)

2. The therapist has less control over the proceedings and client behavior. Potentially more things could go wrong before the leader could intervene.
3. The group leader also has more control in the sense of influencing capabilities. This power can be used for better or worse.
4. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed or enforced since other group members do not necessarily live by the same moral codes that we do. (See Davis & Meara article in this chapter.)
5. Many group leaders practice without benefit of any training, education, or supervision. There are no standardized criteria for acceptable qualifications. In the same city, a psychiatrist, psychologist, astrologer, palm reader, and prostitute can all label their professional activities as "group therapy" of one sort or another.
6. Because groups are such intense environments, the risks for each member are greater. Change and damage are accelerated.
7. The screening of clients is often haphazard. Often they are required to participate involuntarily in the experience.
8. The lines are muddled that separate unethical, incompetent, and inappropriate leader behaviors, and a discrepancy exists between what leaders say they do versus what they actually practice (See last Kottler article in this chapter).
9. Group work presents some special reentry problems for participants when the sessions have ended.
10. Dependency effects are more pronounced in the creation of "groupies."
11. There is no licensure, certification, or regulation that can effectively enforce the practice of responsible group leadership (see articles by Roberts and Gumaer in *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 7, 1982).
12. Ethical decision making skills are rarely included in the professional training and development of group leaders (see Paradise & Siegelwaks article in *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 7, 1982).
13. It is difficult to document the effectiveness and to evaluate the results of group work progress (see Brown article in *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 7, 1982).

Each of these considerations, unique to the practice of group work, makes our task of functioning responsibly and ethically that much harder. Only through further study and dialogue can we hope to refine our ethical decision making skills and improve our competence as practitioners. The articles in this special issue cover a broad range of topics intended to raise as many questions as provide answers to the universal query echoing through the centuries: How ought we to act?

Ethical Considerations in Using Group Techniques

Gerald Corey, Marianne Schneider Corey, Patrick Callanan,
and J. Michael Russell

This article presents specific issues in implementing techniques at all the stages of groups. It is designed to stimulate thought leading to ethical practice and the appropriate use of techniques.

The Association for Specialists in Group Work has approved *Ethical Guidelines for Group Leaders* (ASGW, 1980; see article by Roberts, *Journal of Specialists in Group Work*, 7, 1982). These guidelines address the leader's responsibility for providing information about group work to clients and for providing group services to clients. We were influenced by these guidelines in developing our views on the ethical considerations in using group techniques.

Techniques are powerful instruments. Their abuse is not always due to a lack of concern for clients; abuse can also come from a lack of awareness of the potential effects of techniques. Thus in our training workshops for group leaders we encourage spontaneity and inventiveness in the use of techniques, yet we also teach the participants the importance of having a rationale and some theoretical framework for these techniques. We urge group leaders to strike a balance between creativity and irresponsible lack of caution.

We believe that the reputation of group work has suffered from irresponsible practitioners, mostly those who use techniques in a gimmicky, ill-conceived, or inappropriate way. But we surely do not want to foster the myth that there is a tidy body of techniques firmly embedded in clear-cut scientific doctrine guaranteed to lead to highly predictable outcomes when used by omniscient specialists. Neither do we want people to become overly rigid and frightened in their group leadership. Basically, we believe that if the group leader has a sound academic background, has had extensive

supervised group experience, has experienced his or her own therapy (preferably including experience as a group member), and has a fundamental respect for his or her clients, that group leader is not likely to abuse techniques.

Preparation of Group Members

Providing Information About the Group

The techniques appropriate for a group depend on the goals and qualifications of the leader. Prospective members and referring agencies should be informed about these goals and qualifications. A group that advertises itself to the general public should make its particular population and purposes clear. Is it a support group for parents without partners, a personal-growth group, or some type of special interest group? Will the group be open or closed? Will the group have a fixed number of sessions, or will it continue as long as there is interest? All these matters should be clearly stated in advance.

Prospective group members have a right to know about the leader's qualifications, including experiences in leading groups. As far as is feasible, the leader must explain to prospective members the kinds of techniques likely to be employed, and these techniques should be congruent with the leader's level of training and experience. Leaders should not suppose that the mere possession of relevant academic degrees and licenses guarantees that they are personally or experientially qualified for employing any technique, and they should not assume that citing such degrees is sufficient for fully informing prospective members about their qualifications. If emphasis is going to be on some specialized or experimental techniques, it is appropriate for leaders to indicate that they have the experience to employ such techniques. Leaders who cannot substantiate their training in the specialized techniques they plan to use in their groups may be misleading their clients.

In setting group goals and identifying proposed techniques, leaders should be aware that the material they wish to explore should connect with issues they have encountered in their own lives. And while they may not have experienced every specific technique they intend to use, they should have personally experienced the general kinds of techniques they want to employ or

should have learned about them under the supervision of or in collaboration with someone familiar with them.

Although group members should be informed in advance about the kinds of procedures and techniques that are likely to be employed in the group, it would be unrealistic to try to explain every technique. But group members can be informed about the general style of the leader. Certainly, if the leader intends to employ exotic techniques such as nudity, highly cathartic techniques, or confrontive techniques designed to break down defenses, the client should be fully aware of these intentions.

Freedom of Exit From a Group

One of the ASGW's (1980) ethical guidelines states that group leaders have the responsibility for informing members in advance that their participation in the group is voluntary and that they have the right to exit from the group at any time. It is our position that the leader's attitudes and policies on the issue of "freedom of exit" should be spelled out during the pregroup individual screening interview or at the preliminary group session. Further, we think that group members have a responsibility to the leaders and members to explain why they want to leave. We have several reasons for this policy. It can be deleterious to members to leave without being able to discuss what they considered threatening or negative about the group experience and, in addition, it is unfortunate for members to leave a group because of a misunderstanding about some feedback they have received. On the other side, it can be damaging to other members if they suppose that someone left the group because of something they said or did.

By having the person who is leaving the group present reasons for desired departure to the group as a whole, we give the other members an opportunity to check out any concerns they may have about their responsibility for that person's decision. We tell our members that they have an obligation to attend all sessions and to inform us and the group should they decide to withdraw. If members even consider withdrawing, we encourage them to say so because such an acknowledgement inevitably provides extremely important material with which to work. While we do not seek to subject members to a debate or to undue pressure to stay, we stress the serious impact their leaving will have on the whole group, especially if they do so without explanation.

The Leader's Motivations and Theoretical Stance

Being Aware of Motivations

We are concerned about leaders who use techniques to protect themselves, to meet their own needs for power or prestige, or to control the members of their groups. Leaders who are unaware of their own motivations can easily impose their unmet needs and their values on the members of their groups. One of the ASGW's (1980) ethical guidelines that we see as especially important is the following: "Group leaders shall refrain from imposing their own agendas, needs, and values on group members." There are many ways that leaders can misuse techniques if they are unaware of their motivations. They may apply pressure on certain individuals to get them to perform in desired ways. They may use techniques mainly to impress participants with their therapeutic prowess or to steer members away from explorations of feelings and issues they personally find threatening. They may use highly confrontive techniques and exercises to stir up aggression in their groups.

The potential exists for leaders to hide behind their position. They can camouflage their incompetence, fearfulness, or insecurity by seeking to create the impression that they are all-knowing and all-powerful. They can keep their real feelings hidden and project only what is consistent with the impression they wish to create; and they can choose techniques that perpetuate this illusion.

In all such cases, the leader's needs become primary, while those of the members assume relative unimportance. Even experienced leaders are sometimes slow to recognize such motivations in their use of various techniques. When these become patterns, one hopes they will show up in the leader's own therapy or supervision sessions. Coleaders can also point out these patterns. If leaders do not have supervisors or coleaders, they should make a habit of reviewing group sessions and be alert to ways their own needs and motives may be getting in the way.

Dealing With the Superhuman Image

Group members often attribute exaggerated power and wisdom to leaders, and there is the temptation for leaders who are motivated by a need for power to unethically reinforce this misconception. One way to avoid such reinforcement is to be willing to explain the purpose of a suggested technique. Although it is

distracting to regularly explain the point of a technique in advance, it can on occasion be appropriate for a member to ask and for a leader to state the purpose of a technique or an exercise. At times, providing a general explanation or rationale for a technique can lessen the impression that leaders are superhuman wizards.

Having a Theoretical Rationale for Using Techniques

Leaders cannot always predict the exact outcomes of techniques, but they can have some expected outcomes in mind or have an idea of how a technique is connected with the material of the moment. If a supervisor, colleague, or group member asks a leader: "Why did you use that technique? What did you hope to gain from it?" the leader should be able to justify using it. A leader who cannot do so is probably grasping at straws and filling time rather than providing constructive leadership. We are not urging leaders to be so preoccupied with thinking about the rationale for a technique that they become timid and unspontaneous, but being aware of the purpose of a technique can become second nature and does not have to be incompatible with the ability to follow a hunch spontaneously.

Using Techniques to Avoid Leaders' Own Fears

Some leaders introduce techniques to cover up their own fears or unwillingness to explore the themes present in the group. Such diversion frequently occurs with themes relating to lack of closeness and hostility.

Genuine closeness takes time to develop. During some periods in a group's history closeness can often be conspicuously absent. Leaders who feel uncomfortable with this lack of closeness may try to force a false sense of closeness through the use of various techniques. For example, in one group with an apparent lack of closeness, the leader might suggest that members all huddle together. If any technique is to be introduced here, we believe the preferable procedure would be to suggest that members of the group spread out to far corners of the room and then talk about how they feel. In other words, leaders should attempt to make explicit and even exaggerate what is already going on rather than try to overcome their own unease by imposing an artificial solution.

Leaders are sometimes afraid of conflict and thus they introduce some techniques designed to smooth it out, or find some other way to avoid dealing directly with it. Conflict that exists within a group should be acknowledged directly and dealt with openly. If conflict is not brought into the open, it lies dormant and festers and eventually halts productive work in the group. Broadly, this ethical concern could be stated as follows:

One of the most important things a group can and should teach is that one can learn to face and express what one thinks and feels. If group leaders introduce techniques that detract from or cover up the dynamics of the groups, then they are modeling the idea that feelings are to be avoided.

One should be cautious about using techniques at all if they are artificial substitutes for genuine exploration. When a technique is introduced, it should generally serve to highlight the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral material present in the group and not detract from it because of the leader's unease.

Undue Pressure in Using Techniques

Freedom to Decline Participating in Exercises

Two ethical guidelines developed by ASGW (1980) pertain to the issue of pressuring members to get involved in certain techniques from which they might choose to refrain: They refer to risks involved in group participation and to group pressure exerted on members. One of these guidelines deals with protecting group members from coercion and undue peer pressure insofar as is reasonably possible. The other related guideline provides that group members be informed about the personal risks involved in any group. Surely, one such risk involves the undue influence of group pressure that could cause members to act in ways other than those they might independently choose.

Although group pressure is a realistic and oftentimes therapeutic factor leading to change, undue pressure causes us some concern, especially as it relates to coercing members to join into all exercises and activities during a session. For example, a leader may ask members to pair up and engage in a touching exercise or to otherwise express what they are feeling to their partners in a nonverbal way. If leaders are not careful, they can easily create the impression that all members are expected to participate in all

such exercises. Such leaders court the dangers of intruding on members' sensitivities and values, and of not respecting their right to pass, particularly on some of the exercises that they might not want to participate in or might not be ready to handle.

Leaders cannot simply state at the beginning of a group that members have a right not to participate if they choose not to do so, for some members may feel pressured to do what everyone else is doing. Leaders must make it genuinely acceptable for members to pass by mentioning this option periodically when appropriate. To avoid this problem we usually invite members to work on personally meaningful material. If members bring up issues they want to work on, it increases the chance that they can handle whatever might surface.

Further, we typically impress on members that they can decide at what point they wish to stop. Members sometimes open a painful or threatening area and then say that they do not want to go ahead. Generally, we explore their desire for stopping and in this way focus on the factors members find threatening. They may not trust the leader to deal with what will emerge, or they may not trust the group enough to pursue an issue. They may be worried about looking foolish, or they may fear losing control. Even if members decide to stop, we tell them that if at a later time they want to return to the issue we hope that they will announce this desire. The responsibility is then clearly on the members to decide what they will bring out in the group and the level or depth to which they choose to explore the issues they do bring out. Placing responsibility with the members is a built-in safety factor, and it is a sign of our respect for them.

There is another side to this issue. We assume that people who come to a group want some pressure; so the tricky task is to achieve a balance between appropriate pressure and unethical coercion. A leader who is unwilling even to say, "How would it be if you just tried this for a minute, and then we could stop if you like?" may be failing to take some responsibility for maintaining therapeutic leverage. The leader needs to be alert to whether the client is leaving an opening for pursuing the technique, but the leader also has an ethical obligation to respect the client's refusal and yet to attempt to explore the client's reasons for declining.

Pressure From Other Members

Group leaders have an ethical obligation to respond to undue peer pressure on a group member, especially when they have

assured the group that no one will be coerced into making disclosures or participating in the activities. The leader can comment on the peer pressure or can offer an interpretation of the seeming need to coerce and thus can turn the spotlight on the people exerting the pressure. The leader can ask them to talk about why they need to pressure another. The point of this type of intervention is to acknowledge the feelings of those who are exerting the pressure and to see what productive work might be done with those feelings, while reminding the group of the need to respect the wishes of an unwilling member.

Misuse of Confrontational Techniques

Leaders may abuse their power by inappropriately focusing on a member they select. Some leaders derive a sense of power from putting members on the spot, bombarding them with questions, deliberately putting them in a defensive position, or applying pressure on them to open up. One group leader we observed opened a session by calling on a particular member and staying with the same person for the entire session. He believed this was an effective technique to use with resistant members and assumed such pressure would crack their stubborn defenses. We have seen another leader ask question after question, relying on this technique to give the group the appearance of movement. Although we think confrontational techniques can be used to work through members' resistances or defenses, we do not think it appropriate to endlessly interrogate members. Confrontation needs to be handled with care and concern for the member being confronted; it is not to be used by leaders as a club to beat members into submission.

Forced Touching

There are several facets to the ethical issue of using touching as a technique. In some cases leaders use touching techniques to fulfill their own needs or fantasies and are not sensitive to the needs of the members. Leaders may have a lack of touching and physical contact in their own lives, and they compensate for this lack through their work with groups.

Another ethical aspect of touching techniques has to do with their potential artificiality; they can often be used as a short cut to

intimacy. Although increasing ease with physical contact is therapeutically important, this need should be balanced by respect for the readiness and values of the participants. Although we do not discourage spontaneous touching in our groups, we rarely introduce a technique that explicitly directs clients into a physical intimacy they do not want. As a group develops intimacy and risk taking, touching tends to increase; but touching has by then become spontaneous rather than imposed by some artificial technique.

Inappropriate Catharsis

Some leaders evaluate the success of their groups by the degree of emotional intensity they evoke; they are too eager to push people into a cathartic experience for its own sake. Highly emotional sessions are exciting for their drama, and the expression of emotion is certainly an important part of the group process; the danger lies in losing sight of what one hopes would emerge from these cathartic incidents. It is also dangerous to make members believe that they are good members only when they engage in catharsis.

Among the ethical issues brought to the fore by the use of catharsis in group work are the following:

- Whose needs are being met by the catharsis—those of the leader, the group, or the individual member?
- Is the leader clear about what the catharsis is supposed to mean or to what it is supposed to lead?
- Is the leader capable of handling the intensity of the catharsis or to what it might lead?
- Is there enough time in the group session to work with the emotions that arise and to arrive at some resolution?
- Will the group leader have subsequent sessions with the client to deal with the repercussions of the catharsis?
- Is the leader sensitive to the subtle line between invoking catharsis for its therapeutic potential and involving catharsis for the sake of drama?

Leaders should be especially aware of times they use catharsis to fulfill their own and not their clients' needs. For example, leaders may like to see people express anger because they would like to be able to do so themselves, and so they unethically push members to get into contact with angry feelings by developing techniques

to bring out anger and to focus the group on anger. Although anger and its expression and exploration is surely appropriate in groups, the issue is the degree to which the leader's needs become central in the selection of techniques designed to bring out certain feelings in members.

Ethical Aspects of Using Physical Techniques

As with touching, the encounter group movement fostered many techniques to help people express their aggressive feelings—hitting pillows, arm wrestling, pushing and shoving, breaking in or out of a circle. These techniques are often unpredictable in outcome. The symbolic release of aggression can obviously be therapeutically valuable, but one should take relevant precautions. Leaders who introduce such techniques should protect the client and other group members from harm and should be prepared to deal with the unforeseen directions the exercise may take. The concern here is not simply for the physical safety of the clients. If a client has restrained emotion for a long time out of fear of the consequences of expressing it, that fear tragically gets reinforced if the emotion does indeed get out of control when it is finally expressed and proves damaging to others. In general, we avoid physical techniques involving the whole group for safety reasons. We prefer to introduce physical techniques only when pursuing work with an individual with whom we are familiar.

Leaders who introduce physical techniques should have enough experience and training to deal with the consequences. While we encourage leaders to try a variety of techniques, we also see a danger in their foolishly or unthinkingly using techniques they have not experienced themselves or techniques that easily generate material that they have no idea how to handle. Merely reading about techniques and then trying them out is not sufficient. Beginning leaders should use them only with direct supervision or when they are coleading with an experienced counselor.

In addition, leaders should never goad or push members into physical exercises. In inviting members to participate in an exercise the leader must state clearly that members have the option to refrain. Leaders who explain to members the exercise they have in mind, ask them whether they want to try it, and take safety precautions minimize the chances for negative outcomes.

Coleadership Issues

We favor coleadership for a number of reasons. Having more than one leader increases the ways in which a group can function; for example, a female-male team gives members the benefit of having two role models. Members can also benefit from the differing perceptions of different coleaders. One of the coleaders may have the ability to contact and work with certain difficult members, while the other leader might be unable to reach them.

From the viewpoint of the coleaders, each can build on the other's style, and they can complement and extend each other's work with individuals. Coleaders can provide each other with valuable feedback after each session, and they can share impressions of what occurred in the group. They can talk about what they think the group needs or a direction in which they think the group should move. They can plan and evaluate sessions. They can bring two perspectives to the understanding of certain individuals or particular relationships in the group.

An ethical issue arises when coleaders form a relationship that inhibits the group's progress. For instance, group leaders who have sharp differences may cause group members to polarize. Coleaders who are competitive may push the members into using techniques designed simply to prove the prowess of one or the other leader. To avoid these problems coleaders need to establish a relationship based on trust and respect, one in which each leader can function as an individual, yet one that is characterized by harmony and teamwork wherein both coleaders work for the good of the members. In such a relationship, the primary aim is not to fulfill the needs of the leaders but to provide diversity for the members.

Concluding Comments

We have limited ourselves to discussing important ethical questions connected with the use of techniques in groups. Other crucial ethical and professional issues in group practice that we have not addressed include: recruiting, screening, selecting, and preparing group members; involuntary participation in groups; issues pertaining to confidentiality; issues concerning termination and reentry; controversial issues in group practice; and specific issues concerning the group leader's training, supervision, and level

of competence. We have explored these topics in more detail elsewhere (Corey, 1981; Corey & Corey, 1982; Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1979).

The most important point we hope we have conveyed is that techniques can be harmful if used inappropriately or insensitively. They can injure group members physically or emotionally. Ethical concerns arise when techniques are used simply as gimmicks and are not designed to serve the needs of the participants. The negative popular image of groups has come from the abuse of techniques, from using them to replace what a group fundamentally is—an arena for genuine and caring human interaction.

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Recommended Readings

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So You Think It Is a Secret

Kathleen L. Davis and Naomi M. Meara

Group confidentiality is difficult to enforce. A hypothetical situation is presented to illustrate how members might violate confidentiality. Group cohesiveness and certain leader skills can help to maintain confidentiality norms.

When seeking help with a problem, people choose a person they can trust. They assume that the helper they have chosen is able to keep a secret. Clients seeking professional help expect that their secrets are safe. Perhaps, of all the ethical responsibilities that professional helpers have, clients are most concerned about confidentiality.

Confidentiality in individual or group counseling means the counselor or psychologist is not allowed to disclose anything said in the interview without the client's permission (American Personnel and Guidance Association, 1981; American Psychological Association, 1981). In the individual counseling session only two people, the client and the counselor, focus on the client's concerns. The client has the freedom to tell anyone what was said or what happened during the session. This freedom is generally accepted by the counselor as the client's personal decision. In the group counseling session there are more than two people, the members and the leader or leaders, focusing on many members' concerns and interactions. If members are free to tell anyone what happened or was said in the group session, there is a good chance that they will divulge personal information about someone other than themselves. Therefore, most leaders do not support the members' freedom to talk about the group or its participants to nongroup members (Davis, 1980; Gazda, 1978).

The recent APGA Ethical Standards (1981) specify: "In a group setting, the counselor must set a norm of confidentiality regarding all group participants' disclosures" (p. A). According to this standard, the group leader is ethically bound to state the expectation that information revealed in the group is not to be disclosed outside

the group. If this expectation is not accepted by the group, then it will not become a norm for the group. If the leader's expectation is accepted by a majority of group members, then it will become a group norm (Shaw, 1981). There is no way to guarantee that confidentiality will be honored by every group member, however. The Association for Specialists in Group Work (1980) recognizes that confidentiality is difficult, if not impossible, to enforce. Davis (1980) found that group members do reveal information learned in the group to others and that the leader's presentation of confidentiality affects members' disclosures outside the group. Groups whose leaders talked about disclosures to other people had a lower percentage of members breaking confidentiality.

Usually, the first opportunity a group leader has to discuss confidentiality with a potential group member is in the screening interview. The American Psychological Association (1973) suggests the inclusion of a statement about confidentiality expectations in the written contract given to each potential participant before the group begins. During the initial screening interview it needs to be made clear that the general expectation for confidentiality includes the leader as well as the members. Also at this time, several other aspects of confidentiality need to be discussed; for example, early termination, discussions with the leader outside the group, and legal protection. Even if a member leaves the group, that member is still expected to honor confidentiality. If a member talks with the leader about the group outside the sessions, the member is expected to inform the group about the conversation at the next meeting. If a group member is involved in a court action, the leader cannot guarantee legal protection for what is revealed in the group (Foster, 1975).

In the first group session, the leader needs to review his or her expectations and discuss confidentiality with members. The leader may ask the members whom they would like to tell about what happens in the group, what they would like to tell these people, what the purpose is of talking to others, and how they would feel if they learned another group member was talking about them. A few members may state that they have no secrets and they are not going to say anything they would not say to anyone else. Some members may question how deep the group will get into their personal concerns. Many times these questions will be an indication of participants' fears that they will be pressured to reveal things in the group that they do not want others to know. A controversial issue that is usually initiated by members during the discussion of confidentiality is whether they will be permitted to

talk to other members about the group outside the sessions. After responding to these issues and concerns, the leader needs to help the group reach a consensus about the limits of confidentiality for their group. Even if a majority accepts a rule for confidentiality, this does not mean that everyone has accepted the norm and there may be variations in participants' interpretations of the norm. At least through the discussion, the members may become aware of how other members view confidentiality.

After this initial discussion the group members may think that they have a clear agreement about what is expected. While a general discussion may sensitize members to the issues, it is not until a group member discloses personal information that differences in interpretation may arise. For instance, assume the leader has discussed confidentiality in the screening interview and initial session. Near the beginning of the second session, Mary says:

I really don't like it when my boss makes sexual advances toward me. This afternoon he asked me to go to dinner with him, just the two of us. I really felt uncomfortable. Thank goodness I had this group tonight so I got out of it.

While Mary may not consider this information confidential, the group must. In fact she may have already told a friend about her boss, or may be planning to do so. As long as Mary does not refer to the group, this is her prerogative and in no way violates group confidentiality.

Some breaches in group confidentiality may occur when a member (a) has an emotional reaction to a statement or a session; (b) seeks enhancement with others; (c) wants to help another group member; (d) does not feel he or she is a group member; (e) does not trust other members; and (f) needs more support or understanding than what is offered in the group. For instance, Mary's statement may elicit from some members the following cognitive reactions that illustrate, in order, these reasons.

Bob: My wife was late coming home three times this month. I better ask her if her boss is suggesting things to her. I wonder if she's afraid to tell me.

Jane: I was telling my women's group, sexual harassment was going on in town. Here's the proof I need.

Ted: I think I'll speak to the personnel director at my plant. Mary seems to be a nice person and she probably wants a new job. I'd like to help her.

Hazel: I don't know why I joined this group. Mary and most of these people are so young. My friends and I have talked about our husbands being surrounded by younger seductive women all day. I'd better warn Betty that John's flirting with Mary.

William: Mary is just like Sue. I'll bet she's leading her boss on.

Patrick: I've been accused of that. I've tried to be careful lately, I'd better check it out.

The leader must be aware that there is a high probability some members are reacting to Mary's statement. If the leader does not encourage these members to voice their thoughts and reactions, there is a good chance that confidentiality will be broken.

To decrease the likelihood of confidentiality violations, the leader must have a good command of individual counseling skills, which can be used with the group or individual members, as well as some specific group skills. The group leader must be aware of members' nonverbal reactions to a member's statement. The leader may acknowledge members' nonverbal reactions in a specific manner (e.g., "Bob, you looked worried," or "Patrick, your face turned red when Mary was talking") or with a general statement (e.g., "A number of you seemed to have a reaction as Mary was talking. Who would like to share their reactions?").

A counseling skill used with more intentionality in groups than in individual counseling is modeling. The leader models communication and interpersonal skills to give members examples of how they are to function within the group (Trotzer, 1977). The leader may model by reflecting a member's feelings, clarifying, going first in an exercise, or self-disclosing perceptions or personal material. If the leader were to give a personal reaction to Mary's statement, the other group members might follow by sharing their reactions.

Pointing out commonalities in members' statements or perceptions is labeled *linking* (Corey & Corey, 1977; Trotzer, 1977). Linking is a skill that must be in the group leader's repertoire to promote interaction among group members. Since the example occurs in an early session, there is a slim chance that the leader will be able to link together Mary's concerns with those of other members. If Jane has said something about her feminist affiliation, the leader might say: "Jane, you and Mary seem to share a concern about women being placed in difficult positions by their employers." Hazel, William, and Patrick may have different perceptions of the employee-employer relationship than Mary and Jane. To

ensure that all sides of the issue are heard, the leader could make a moderating response (Trotzer, 1977). An example would be:

We've heard how female employees have a difficult time dealing with their employers. What about those of you involved from the employer's side? Any employers having a difficult time dealing with their female employees?

If the leader were aware of the differences in the members' views, a linking response would be even more appropriate. The leader might say:

Mary and Jane seem to share a concern about employers making advances toward women employees, while Hazel and William seem to be concerned about the other side of the issue—the employers being enticed by younger female workers.

Toward the end of this session, the leader should suggest that members discuss their thoughts and reactions to the meeting (Corey & Corey, 1977). Ted might disclose how he was hoping to help Mary. The leader would tell Ted to ask Mary if she wanted a new job. Mary could then decide for herself whether to apply for a new position at Ted's plant and confidentiality would not be broken.

The leader also could remind the members about the importance of confidentiality. Periodic reminders should be initiated by the leader (Corey & Corey, 1977; Gazda, 1978) to decrease the probability of members talking about the group between sessions with others and to clarify members' interpretations of the confidentiality norm.

The leader alone cannot force the group to adhere to the confidentiality norm. The members have to enforce it themselves. Research indicates conformity to group norms occurs in cohesive groups (Shaw, 1981). The more cohesive the group, the more likely it is for members to conform to the confidentiality norm and to exert pressure on other members to conform.

Group cohesiveness requires opportunities for interaction and takes time to develop. Obviously, the leader cannot focus on just building a cohesive group; the group is meeting for other purposes. There are some leader skills that will help the group work toward its goal(s) and at the same time encourage group cohesiveness. Structuring the group so members understand how they will attain their goals is one way to do both (Shaw, 1981). Providing feedback with the positive feedback preceding the negative (Schaible & Ja-

cobs, 1975) and linking members' attitudes and concerns (Corey & Corey, 1977; Trotzer, 1977) are useful skills that can serve dual purposes.

Even in a highly cohesive group, the confidentiality norm might be violated. If this happens, the members will first try to talk directly to the violator(s) before applying other types of pressure toward conformity, such as name calling, ridiculing, ignoring, and excluding. Many times the violation is the result of a personal misinterpretation of group confidentiality. The leader must assist the members in clarifying the restrictions the confidentiality norm places on them because the group process will be affected if confidentiality violations continue.

At the last session, the leader should remind members that what was said or happened in the group is still to remain secret. Confidentiality is even more difficult to enforce once the group has terminated. Although the group members may honor the norms they have agreed on, there is a lack of legal protection. If Mary decided to prosecute her boss for sexual harassment, her lawyer could subpoena every group member. The members and leader would probably have to testify as witnesses concerning the psychological discomfort she was experiencing during the group meetings.

The ideal for group confidentiality is that members do not share with nongroup members any information learned in the group. This ideal is seldom realized. Members who learn something new about themselves want to share it with family members and friends with whom they feel a close affiliation. The members may decide that such sharings do not violate confidentiality unless information about others in the group is also revealed. Members need to be very careful when talking about themselves to others that they do not disclose group information. It is very tempting to attribute a new insight to the group, a particular member, or the leader. Confidentiality is violated if the conversations or actions of others leading to the insight are repeated.

If the group agrees that members may talk to other members outside the sessions, it should be with the understanding that the conversation will be discussed at the next meeting. Confidentiality is essential to the group's productivity and cohesiveness (Gazda, 1978), which in turn are dependent on members' self-disclosures, trust levels, and interactions with one another.

Group members cannot assume that anything they say or hear in the group will be kept secret. They should be able to make an informed choice about how much they reveal to the group; there-

fore, they need to know about the difficulties in enforcing confidentiality.

Often, leaders briefly discuss confidentiality in a screening interview and an initial session. Since issues of confidentiality will arise over the course of the group sessions, leaders must spend more group meeting time on this issue. Leaders also need to use techniques to intervene in situations that harbor the potential for breaches in group confidentiality.

There are many reasons members break confidentiality and the leader cannot prevent all violations. If confidentiality becomes a norm for a cohesive group, there is a greater likelihood that members' secrets will remain in the group; however, there still are no guarantees.

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Ethical Issues and Group Work With Children

Cynthia K. Terres and Marva J. Larrabee

Group work became extremely popular during the 1960s and early 1970s. Professional issues associated with group counseling and therapy emerged as professional organizations such as the American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD, formerly American Personnel and Guidance Association [APGA]) and the American Psychological Association (APA) struggled with questions concerning ethical problems of group work (Van Hoose & Kottler, 1978). Van Hoose and Kottler indicated that much of the professional literature implies that the general confusion regarding group counseling and therapy has now been resolved; they concluded, however, that among professionals and among the general public problems, confusion, and doubt about ethics still exist. It seems clear that elementary and middle school counselors using group work with children must resolve any confusion if their work is to provide the highest quality service in school settings.

For elementary and middle school counselors who work with groups, several ethical issues need particular attention. Over 10 years ago Zimpfer (1971) reminded us that because groups are a powerful force, they demand special consideration for ethical practice. Because children and adolescents are especially influenced by peer pressure, group leaders "should take into account . . . each individual's level of ability for taking responsibility for his own decisions and actions" (p. 282). The Ethical Guidelines for Group Leaders, approved by the Association of Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) in 1980 (reprinted in Callis, Pope, & DePauw, 1982; Corey & Corey, 1982), are the acceptable guidelines for group work practice for counselors working with elementary and middle school students. In this article these guidelines are applied particularly to group work with minors in elementary and middle school set-

tings. Specifically, the article focuses on the ethical standards for counselor competence and the planning and implementation of group work in schools.

Students have the right to a competent counselor in a group situation. Eberlein (1977) called attention to client rights and acknowledged that these "rights have often been ignored by counselors and their employers" (p.219). Leader competence is a primary issue in ensuring that consumers are protected against inferior counseling services. Unfortunately, the competence of group leaders and the competence of individual counselors are not synonymous (Larrabee & Terres, 1984). Elementary and middle school counselors should be guided by the ASGW ethical guidelines in assessing their own competence as group leaders.

The only ASGW standard that deals specifically with leader competence is B-7, which states, "Group leaders shall not attempt any technique unless thoroughly trained in its use or under supervision by an expert familiar with the intervention" (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). When elementary and middle school counselors consider leading counseling groups or conducting other types of group work, they need to be aware that "they can't lead all kinds of groups or work with all kinds of clients" (p.36). Rossberg (1980) stated that "group leaders have a responsibility to limit their group practice to developed levels of competence and skill, and to reveal those limits to their clients" (p.565).

Counselors must be responsible for assessing their own competence as group leaders. Often competence is assumed until an involved adult complains about a counselor's methods of practice either in the press or in the courts. Counselors may be surprised to find that their beliefs about consumer rights and counselor responsibilities are inaccurate and that ignorance of the law and of ethics is no protection (Eberlein, 1977).

Corey and Corey (1982) suggested that counselors be familiar with the special ethical considerations of group leadership and with their own personal limitations. The following questions can help counselors assess their limitations as group leaders:

1. Am I qualified to lead this specific group?
2. What criteria can I use to determine my degree of competence?
3. Perhaps I am "technically qualified," but do I have the practical training or experience necessary to conduct this group?
4. How can I recognize my limits?

5. If I am not as competent as I would like to be, what specifically can I do? (Corey, 1981, p. 408).

Another critical issue when assessing competence is the ability of elementary and middle school counselors to determine the appropriateness of group experiences for specific children. The ASGW guidelines address this issue in Standard A-2, which states in part: "select group members whose needs and goals are compatible with the established goals of the group, who will not impede the group process, and whose well-being will not be jeopardized by the group experience" (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). Thus, counselors of children must be knowledgeable of the developmental stages and the tasks of each age level to comply with this guideline for group member selection. It cannot be assumed that all group experiences will be good for all children.

Further assessment of competence is generally determined by a counselor's educational experience and training in group process. The guidelines clearly state that supervised practice in group work is essential (Corey & Corey, 1982). Although experience as a participant in a therapeutic group is recommended by some authors (Corey, 1981), the ASGW guidelines do not specify this criterion for competence. School counselors who are planning to incorporate more group work in their guidance programs may find discussions of the kinds of groups that enhance group leader training to be beneficial (e.g., Corey, 1981; Corey & Corey, 1982).

Counselors in elementary and middle schools are often the only professionals in their work settings with any mental health expertise. They may find that they are assumed competent to conduct all group experiences for their clientele. It is crucial that counselors carefully examine their skills both in developmental group guidance and in group counseling. It seems that certified school counselors should have little difficulty with group guidance activities, but they may not have the expertise needed to lead specific group counseling experiences (e.g., alcohol and drug use, death and dying, divorce and family conflicts). Although counselors may believe their skills are applicable to all types of groups, the ASGW guidelines raise questions about that conclusion.

The needs of students in any school setting may vary over time. Therefore, it seems reasonable and professional to recommend that counselors seek additional training in group leadership that will qualify them to deal with specific counseling topics and procedures. In fact, according to the AACD Ethical Standards (APGA, 1981), to function ethically a counselor must make contin-

nous efforts to improve professional practice by participating in professional growth experiences throughout his or her career. Elementary and middle school counselors cannot afford to neglect these guidelines. The conscientious school counselor must take advantage of professional workshops, additional graduate course work, and other professional meetings on a regular basis.

Planning for Groups in Schools

Several ASGW guidelines have implications for planning group work in elementary and middle school settings. Issues related to student and parent rights and to the internal and external constraints of the school setting must be considered in planning group work.

Section A of the ASGW guidelines focuses on the group leader's responsibility to provide information about group work to clients. Counselors have an ethical responsibility "to inform group members, in advance and preferably in writing, of the goals in the group, qualifications of the leader, and procedures employed." (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). This ethical guideline (A-1) requires the counselor to understand the additional responsibilities of group leaders who are employed as counselors in schools. To inform group members of these criteria, counselors in elementary and middle schools must expand this guideline to include responsibility to provide information to parents and guardians of minors.

Neither the AACD or ASCA ethical standards deals fully with students' rights versus parents' rights (Nugent, 1981; Wagner, 1978), and neither addresses appropriate procedures related to group participation. In this issue of *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling* Cooney thoroughly discusses one aspect of the standard for providing information about groups. Counselors must understand and be prepared to deal effectively with the constraints of the school counselor's role when he or she works with minors and encounters the interaction between student rights and parent rights. Such constraints may be either internal or external to the school.

The work of elementary and middle school counselors is affected by external constraints that are focused primarily on legal issues and community expectations. Of course, conflicts with individual parents will occur, but competent school counselors must be aware of the federal and state regulations regarding the rights of minors (Talbutt, 1980) and be knowledgeable about local school district policies to avoid potential conflicts inherent in the group

counseling situation in schools. Because school counselors have responsibilities to students, parents, and society (Burgum & Anderson, 1975), guidelines are essential to address the potential legal and ethical conflicts that arise when working with minors. Recently, attempts to inform counselors of these conflicts and to interpret the positions held by professional organizations have addressed medical rights (Talbutt, 1980), confidentiality (Wagner, 1978), child abuse, drugs, and pregnancy issues (Kennedy & Reynolds, 1977). Remley's article in chapter 3 of this book also sheds light on these matters.

A counselor's adherence to the law is not always a suitable solution in conflict situations. It is clear that community expectations may be ignored in some conflicts concerning student-parent rights and that entire guidance programs could be jeopardized by negative community responses to a particular counselor's decision in a conflict situation. For example, Nugent (1981) reported that minors in some states have legal rights to see doctors or other professionals about drug use, abortion, or contraceptives without parental consent. Although it may be suitable and legal to address these student needs in a group setting, community reactions to such efforts must be anticipated and adequately addressed by counselors in their program planning efforts. (See Remley's article for additional information.)

Counselors have an added responsibility to prepare school personnel for implementation of group counseling by establishing group procedures compatible with the school philosophy and respectful of student privacy. Corey and Corey (1982) recommended developing a program in which the counselor is in continuous contact with the students' teachers, principal, and parents. This contact will enable groups to be established based on the needs of students. An advisory group, composed of a representative from separate groups of parents, teachers, and students, would allow everyone to help plan the kind of groups offered in a guidance program. With this consensus the counselor can describe group experiences that are compatible with his or her experience and training. Outside resources may be tapped when counselors judge themselves inadequately prepared for a specific kind of group.

It is clear that group leaders must state their limits of competence to clients when initiating group counseling (Rossberg, 1980). In the case of elementary and middle school counselors, the term *clients*, as used by Rossberg, may refer to the advisory group described because children would not be expected to understand these concepts. When a counselor states his or her limitations

according to the ethical standards, the advisory planning group can help develop outside resources for meeting the specific needs of the age group of the students with whom the counselor works. This consultation group can also help in acquisition of funds for the professional development experiences that a counselor desires for updating his or her skills in group work or any other area important to guidance program leadership.

Implementing Group Work in Schools

Group services may be initiated in the school setting after the counselor's competence for conducting groups in schools has been determined and after the necessary planning has occurred. ASGW ethical standard A-2 directs the counselor to "conduct a pre-group interview with each prospective member . . ." (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). In the elementary or middle school, counselors may already have a well-defined program of guidance established in the school. Thus, through classroom contact counselors may believe that they know students well. It is essential, however, that a pregroup interview be conducted no matter how well the counselor knows the child. This interview enables the counselor and student to establish firmly the goals of the group experience and the student's reasons for participating. It also allows the counselor to protect the student's well-being and determine if the group process will be impeded by the student's participation in the group.

According to the ASGW standards, counselors "shall protect members by defining clearly what confidentiality means, why it is important, and the difficulties involved in enforcement" (Callis et al., 1982, p.173). In elementary and middle schools it is essential that this standard (A-3) be implemented during the pregroup interview and also at the initial meeting of the group. This standard may seem particularly difficult to explain to elementary and middle school students. Ohlsen (1974) listed 14 questions commonly asked by students about groups. Two of these questions address the issue of confidentiality—"What can I say in the group?" and "Can I really trust others in the group with personal problems?" If confidentiality is to be maintained, it is essential to state initially, and at every group session that follows, the need to talk about issues within the group and to keep the information that is shared by others private.

Counselors must recognize that they can guarantee only their own adherence to the confidentiality guidelines (see Olsen, 1971).

It would be a serious counselor error to assume that because confidentiality has been discussed once in the group it will be understood. All group members need to be reminded regularly of the confidentiality principle (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1984). Thus, in helping youngsters to understand the positive results of interaction with peers and the advantages of privately sharing concerns, feelings, and problems with others, counselors will be more likely to ensure that group members adhere to confidentiality by regularly repeating the advantages associated with the confidentiality standard.

Section B of the ASGW guidelines and the Preamble of the American School Counselor Association Ethical Standards for School Counselors (1984) focused on the counselor's responsibility to provide services to clients or pupils. Specifically, ASGW Guideline B-1 and ASCA Preamble Statement 4 recognized that within the structure of the school program student rights must be preserved by protecting the student from "physical coercion, and undue peer pressure insofar as is reasonably possible" (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). To adhere to this standard counselors must be aware of the place where group sessions are held. The structure of the physical environment must include the space and privacy that are essential for effective group work. Physical structuring, such as determining group size and the length of each session, has received attention in the literature on elementary and middle school groups (Corey & Corey, 1982; Muro & Dinkmeyer, 1977). The rationale for these decisions has often revolved around the developmental growth stages of the student.

There are ethical reasons to consider when establishing space, privacy, age and number of participants, and length of sessions. Conducting counseling groups with twelve 6-year-olds sitting on the floor of a 5- by 7-foot room may not provide the best atmosphere for counselors to protect group members from physical threats and coercion as specified in the the ASGW standards. It is more likely that a group of five or six 8-year-olds seated in comfortable chairs for 30 minutes might allow greater "opportunity to utilize group resources and interact within the group" in accordance with ASGW standard B-3 (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). Thus, the basis for structuring the environment of a counseling group is found in the ethical standards. When questioned about the rationale for a private group room, a specified number of students for a group, and the length of time needed per session, a counselor should refer to the professional standards for support in seeking adequate facilities.

When determining the number of sessions necessary for a group, counselors again may refer to the ethical standards. Standard B-6 states that "group leaders shall help promote independence of members from the group in the most efficient period of time" (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). The number of group sessions should not be determined because there are 6 weeks in the grading period or because the music teacher comes for one semester and some of the pupils can miss this class to attend the group. The number of sessions should be determined by the goals the group wishes to accomplish using the most efficient period of time.

In addition to determining group goals, the counselor, according to ASGW Guideline B-9, also has a responsibility to "make every effort to assist clients in developing their personal goals" (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). Therefore, once group goals have been decided, the counselor may also consider the time needed for individual goals to be met before determining the number of sessions for the group. Because ASGW Guideline B-10 indicates that it may be necessary to have "between session consultation to group members and follow-up after termination of the group, as needed or requested" (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173), counselors must consider these factors when determining how long services will be extended. The ethical standards related to physical structuring of group work may be quite helpful to elementary and middle school counselors when communicating to parents, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel the principles of group work with children.

When conducting groups, particularly in middle schools, counselors may be confronted with student use of alcohol or drugs. Standard B-8 states that "group leaders shall not condone the use of alcohol or drugs directly prior to or during group sessions" (Callis et al., 1982, p. 173). This standard is likely to concur with most school system guidelines on the use of alcohol or drugs. The guideline does not exclude discussing the issues or assisting youngsters who may be using drugs. It does specify clearly that counselors should discourage the use of these substances before or during group sessions. To comply with this standard, counselors need to be knowledgeable of physiological signs of drug use and develop a suitable way to check the group's compliance with this standard. Certainly, counselors should include discussion of this standard in pregroup interviews and initial group meetings with middle school students. If a group member discloses information about drug use, the counselor must restate his or her position on drugs and alcohol and the conflict between the ethical standards of confidentiality

and school policy. To gain the respect necessary for effective group leadership, counselors need to challenge students who come to a group session inebriated or under the influence of drugs (Corey et al., 1984).

Conclusion

Several aspects of implementing group work in elementary and middle schools are specified clearly in professional ethical standards. These aspects, such as the requirements for pregroup interviews, continuous attention to confidentiality, and physical structuring conducive to assuring group member safety and growth, are essential to implementing group work with minors in the school setting. It is imperative that a thorough review and a basic understanding of the ASGW and AACD ethical standards be accomplished by elementary and middle school counselors before they conduct group counseling and guidance sessions in schools.

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Unethical Behaviors We All Do and Pretend We Do Not

Jeffrey A. Kottler

The author highlights common unethical behaviors that occur in groups and argues for more honest self-monitoring in group work practice.

One would expect that a set of articles such as those contained in this special issue would include a warning to the practitioner about certain unethical practices; that the clinician would be admonished to watch one's p's and q's, stay out of trouble, and follow certain guidelines described therein. Actually, there are several existing sources that do just that (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1979; Gazda, 1978; VanHoose & Kottler, 1977). In these publications, clinicians are urged to study their ethical codes, familiarize themselves with relevant law, debate issues with colleagues, and closely monitor their behavior as well as the actions of peers since ethics is virtually unenforceable from existing sources (Kottler, 1978).

After all the hoopla and threats are over, professional organizations, licensing boards, and courts can actually do very little to scrutinize what goes on within the privacy of a therapist's office—unless, of course, there is a complaint filed. Even in that case, it is quite difficult to do anything to halt the destructive behavior.

Naturally, the advanced group leader is expected to operate much more ethically than those with less experience. No longer can we claim we are acting responsibly just because we do not happen to be breaking any laws or professional codes. Ethics is not an all-or-none phenomenon, no matter what the judges and Moral Majority would like us to believe. Most of the field, and indeed most attention, is directed toward the grosser forms of misconduct—sexual improprieties, breach of confidentiality, incompetence, negligence, and malpractice. Much indignation occurs among professionals, also, whenever a colleague is caught doing something that is inappropriate. The attitude that prevails is that ethics is

applied to "them," not "us." Yet, to some extent, we all act unethically at times. All of us in the field of group leadership are human beings prone to biases and weaknesses, vulnerable to deception and deceit on a small scale. Occasionally we even make mistakes. To make the subject of ethics more instantly relevant to every group leader, this article discusses some common unethical behaviors of a less significant nature that usually go unchecked.

In this regard, Sheldon Kopp (1976) solicited testimony from a number of prominent therapists as to their most embarrassing mistakes made during illustrious careers. The contributions collectively portrayed the clinician as a fallible being, a wise fool, a person who acts "just plain silly from time to time" (Kopp, 1976, p. 222). The ethical transgressions reported by these famous therapists included: (a) developing inappropriate social relationships with clients as friends; (b) deliberately lying to save face (and getting caught); (c) acting seductively; and (d) seeing clients who really could not be helped. There are many, many other "slightly" unethical behaviors in which we commonly engage, never giving a moment's hesitation. Some of these follow.

No pressure will be put on you to participate unless you want to. Ah! Now there is one of the great lies of our time, similar to the promise made to creditors around the world: "The check is in the mail." Do these promises sound familiar to anyone? They certainly do to me. There is not a group I begin without making that claim. Only later do I catch myself more honestly admitting that no matter how I attempt to protect the rights of each member, incredible pressure—subtle, unconscious, sneaky, and overt—will come to bear on those reluctant to get involved. Occasionally we will jump on the bandwagon, temporarily ignoring our previous promise, and use all our skills to manipulate the reluctant clients to join in even against their will. Are we excused from such transgressions? Certainly. We are, after all, only human. But coping a plea does not diminish the nature of an unethical act.

There are constant tugs pulling on every member to conform, to contribute, to be one of the guys and gals. There are also many good reasons why we underplay these forces and attempt to reassure clients that their privacy will be respected. Realistically, we could not even begin a group unless we successfully convinced participants that their freedom of choice would be encouraged. Nevertheless, is lying for the client's own good a moral act?

Nothing you say will leave this room. Here is another distortion that appears necessary if we are going to get any work done. Confidentiality cannot be enforced absolutely in a group. In all prob-

ability, no matter what safeguards are taken, no matter how careful we are to button our lips, no matter how much we stress the importance of privileged communication, there will be those who slip up. Some clients will inadvertently disclose confidential information during a mindless moment, while others will deliberately run home with a pocket full of juicy details to spill.

What then is the alternative? To be truly honest and above-board, we would have to report to our groups:

There is every reason to believe that any secret you share in here, any private thought you disclose, will be privy only to the people you see here. And, oh yes, perhaps a few of their spouses and friends. Perhaps a few others who overhear.

I neither like nor dislike you; you're a client. Inevitably a group member, or usually more than one, will ask quite directly how we feel about them. Recognizing the dangers of saying what we really think (whether the reactions are positive or negative), we pretend that we do not feel at all. And most of the time, during actual sessions, we do guard against letting our personal feelings get in the way of our therapeutic actions. Again the therapeutic options seem fairly limited: (a) we could respond honestly but risk being seductive if the feelings are positive, or being perceived as hostile if the feelings are negative; (b) we could employ therapeutic maneuvers

4208 ("How would that be helpful for me to tell you?"),

4209 ("What difference would it make to you?"), or

4210 ("I'm sorry. I didn't hear you. Does anyone else have something to say?"); or (c) we could share our problem: "I feel uncomfortable telling you my feelings because then I compromise my neutrality." But then members might wonder why they should be honest if their leader is being so evasive.

Each of these responses creates potential problems we would prefer to leave alone. So, instead we resort to the little white lie, "But it's for their own good," without being quite certain that the excuse is valid.

I bet your mother was a meticulous housekeeper. How many times do we make interpretations not to help the client but to check out the accuracy of our predictions? We occasionally like to play "super sleuth" at the expense of wasting valuable group time. We have formulated a hunch about why people act the way they do, and even though this hypothesis may be completely unrelated to what the group members are currently working through, we

broadcast the interpretation and then smugly wait for confirmation. Naturally, we feel good because our investigative skills have proved once again to be accurate, but the whole episode was actually an exercise in self-indulgence.

I remember the time when . . . Inappropriate self-disclosure is another way in which group leaders keep the focus on themselves and waste time. Unless a therapist has a specific, defensible rationale that can be articulated, it is more likely than not that sharing stories from one's life may be digressive or downright abusive. Each time a group leader engages in long-winded anecdotes that are not specifically intended to deliver an important message or to help a group member work through the presenting concern, then the action is unethical because it negates the client's importance and wastes time.

Facilitative self-disclosure that is well-timed and appropriately implemented satisfies certain criteria mentioned by Corey, Corey, and Callanan (1979):

How crucial is it for group members to perceive you as being human?

What specific intentions do you have for revealing your personal life?

How might clients' progress be hindered as the result of your self-disclosure?

Only after these questions are addressed may the group leader be reasonably certain that self-disclosing interventions are indicated.

I know I can help you. In an effort to plant favorable expectations for success, we sometimes exaggerate what we really can deliver. We are never actually certain that we can keep our promises but we nevertheless understand that such claims are necessary to keep up morale.

Group members enjoy hearing this little lie; they want optimistic assessments desperately. So, for the same reason that a physician might prescribe a placebo in the belief that it will make the patient feel better, we justify our little deceits in a similar vein.

I wonder what would happen if I try . . . Another one of those irreconcilable ethical conflicts centers around using clients as guinea pigs on which to practice an experimental treatment procedure. Are we justified in trying out new technologies before we are sure they are safe and before we have had sufficient supervision in their execution? After returning from a workshop or course, we find many new therapeutic ideas floating around in our

heads, itching to be applied. There is no other way after all to determine if an idea is worth its weight until we try it out for ourselves. But where do we experiment? Can we counsel a group of white rats and then observe their behavior before we try it out on human subjects? Do we wear warning stickers on our foreheads reading: "Caution. The surgeon general has determined that these procedures may be hazardous to your health?"

The only alternative to stagnation is to cautiously and critically experiment with new group strategies, fully aware that they may not work out as we had intended. "Group work is a risky business anyway," we reason. "If the technique does not do the job, we will remember not to use it next time in similar circumstances. Let us just hope that no one is hurt too badly."

If you work hard enough you can be like me when you grow up. Are we justified in creating miniature disciples, surrogate selves? So much of what constitutes group work involves great potential for clients to become dependent on the leader or on the group process. Many "groupies" do become addicted to group work, unable to function without a support system. Alcoholics Anonymous, for instance, operates on just that premise—that members must stay as addicted to AA meetings as they used to be to their liquor.

If we are perfectly honest, we recognize that there are those among us who deliberately create dependencies in clients by sending out clear messages: "You need me. You cannot get along without this group. This will take years of intensive treatment. By the way, do you have Blue Cross insurance?" On a smaller scale, most of us are sometimes guilty of seeing clients longer than absolutely necessary, particularly professionals whose livelihoods depend on client fees. It is easy for me to rationalize that anyone could profit from a group experience no matter how long they attend the sessions. But there usually is a point of diminishing returns when the money a group member invests no longer results in significant products, except further dependency on the leader.

Everyone in this group will be treated equally. The foundation of the U.S. Constitution guarantees that all people regardless of age, sex, race, religion, appearance, and hairstyle will have equal status. The reality of the world, however, is that human beings have definite preferences as to the sort of people they would like to be around. Group leaders, of course, are no different. Holding all things constant, we like the group members more who are sexually attractive, who think like we do, who come from similar backgrounds. In spite of our restraint, we may give more attention

to those who smile and laugh more at our witticisms. Although we attempt to hide our biases, there are those in the group to whom we give less time and patience. In fact, it is no more possible to treat all clients the same as it is for parents to love all their children equally.

The inevitable conclusion during a rare moment of honest vulnerability is that we all act unethically. We are all imperfect beings, inconsistent and hypocritical. We muddle in the dark doing our level best to be genuinely helpful, knowing full well that we cannot possibly please everyone all of the time.

The experienced group leader understands thoroughly that naked confidence and a few primitive helping skills are about all that is necessary to practice this craft, besides a well-integrated ego and a strong sense of ethical convictions. With all the lip service paid to legislating more stringent laws to enforce competence, more specific ethical codes to regulate behavior, peer monitoring, review boards, licensing exams, and other external watchdogs, the fact is that these efforts are more of a smoke screen to convince the public we are trying to police our own ranks than an actual deterrent to immoral behavior.

Ethical codes and laws are all very fine for publishing in professional journals, posting on walls, or presenting to graduate students. There is, naturally, great confusion as to whom the group leader is primarily responsible when often the sources have conflicting demands. Professional codes, institutional policies, legislative mandates, state and federal laws, peer practices, societal expectations, client needs, and parents' wishes all have legitimate claims. The awesome responsibility of group leadership is that practitioners must answer ultimately to themselves for their actions.

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